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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000677

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TAGS: MARR MASS PREL AR

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF DEFENSE STRESSES POSITIVE RELATIONS
WITH U.S.

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4(b)and(d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a March 23 meeting with Ambassador Wayne,
and again on March 28 with visiting Deputy Assistant
Secretary of Defense Stephen Johnson, Defense Minister Nilda

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Garre stressed the importance of the bilateral relationship
with the U.S. and training and exchange opportunities. She
reiterated Argentina's commitment to peacekeeping operations,
particularly in Haiti. Garre noted that the MoD's withdrawal
of its Defense Attaché from NATO, and its rethinking of DATT
assignments in general, was driven by budgetary reasons
primarily and, secondarily, by a decision to focus on new
priority countries such as Japan, India and Australia. Garre
noted that the MoD could benefit from the U.S. military's
experience with joint command, the incorporation of women
into the armed forces, and requested USG assistance in
authorizing the Spanish transfer to Argentina of four older
Westinghouse 2D radars, originally purchased from the U.S.
Please see action request for PM/RSAT paragraph 8. End
Summary.

Positive Relations - Opportunities for Cooperation

¶2. (SBU) On March 23, Ambassador Wayne hosted a lunch for
Defense Minister Nilda Garre, Secretary for Military Affairs
Jose Vasquez Ocampo, Chief of Cabinet Dr. Raul Garre and MoD
Press Coordinator Jorge Bernetti. DATT, Milgp Cmdr and
PolMil Officer attended. Garre noted the good bilateral
relations and said she appreciated the cooperation and
interchange with the U.S. military. This was a message Garre
repeated a week later during her meeting with DASD for
Western Hemisphere Stephen Johnson in connection with the
annual OSD-MoD Bilateral Working Group meetings.

¶3. (SBU) She noted that the MoD and Argentine armed forces
were still in the process of restructuring and could benefit
from the U.S. military's experience with joint command.
Garre stated that the MoD was looking at creating a
Secretariat for Science and Technology and that this was

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another where she would like to build on cooperation with the
U.S. The Minister said her office was also looking at the
issue of women in the Armed forces. She explained that women

currently represented about seven percent of uniformed personnel and that their target was to increase this participation to 15 percent. She noted that for the first time women (12) were included in the crew of Argentina's navy training vessel, the tall ship "Libertad." Note, Libertad will be making several ports of call in the U.S.(Puerto Rico 12-16 May; New York 23-28 May; Boston 29 Sep-03 Oct; Norfolk 06 Oct-10 Oct). End Note.

Peacekeeping Operations

¶14. (SBU) Garre also reiterated the GoA's and MoD's commitment to PKO's, MINUSTAH in particular. The Ambassador stated the USG's appreciation for Argentina's efforts in Haiti and elsewhere and the U.S.'s continued support, including for Argentina's peacekeeping training center CAECOPAZ. Regarding Haiti, the Minister reiterated the GoA position that the long-term solution was not military, and that the MoD would like to incorporate/replace troops with the civilian Gendarmeria (Argentina's paramilitary border patrol). Garre explained that the Joint/Combined headquarters for the Argentine-Chilean PK brigade had been stood up at the MoD in Buenos Aires and that they hoped to have an operation force by the end of 2008. Garre said the intent was to make the brigade a quick reaction force that, at the request of the U.N., could intervene early in a crisis before it explodes.

¶15. (C) When asked about the planned withdrawal of Argentine personnel from Kosovo, Garre said the MoD faced very limited resources and that they were expecting increased demands from the UN, including in Darfur. She stressed that the pullout from Kosovo was a practical decision, not ideological (i.e. operating under a NATO vs UN flag).

Defense Attache are Expensive

¶16. (C) Garre explained that resource and personnel limitations were behind the MoD's decision to recall its DATT from NATO and, in fact, a reevaluation of all DATT assignments worldwide. She noted that a number of assignments required the appointment of senior officers and that the Argentine military simply did not have enough to fill all the senior DATT positions and the needs at home. She also noted that the MoD had shifted some of its priorities and was looking at building relations with countries such as Japan, India and Australia.

Training

¶17. (C) Garre said that the MoD was having to look at training as well and cost saving measures such as perhaps conducting training at home versus sending personnel overseas. DATT and Milgp Cmdr expressed Embassy concern that the MoD was considering not filling at the last moment some of the important education billets such as the Air War College and National Defense University, which precludes inviting another country to attend. Additionally, we expressed concern about not filling some of the personnel exchange officer billets, which have reciprocal ramifications.

Radars

¶18. (SBU) Finally Garre, discussed the process of transferring responsibility for civil aviation air traffic control from the military to civilian authorities and the ongoing problems they were experiencing with their civil air traffic control radars. She also mentioned that Spain was prepared to transfer four older Westinghouse 2D radars to Argentina, which would require USG approval for Spain to make a third party transfer, since the radars were originally

purchased from the U.S. In subsequent meetings, GoA officials have requested Embassy assistance in facilitating the process. Note: Embassy understands that the Spanish request was received in PM/RSAT on April 6, 2007. We would appreciate an update on status and expected action timeframe.

WAYNE